

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**A feasibility study of a need for K-9 Units  
within University Police Departments:**

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**An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**

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## **ABSTRACT**

University law enforcement officers respond to various crimes and are expected to maintain a safe environment to their community. Unfortunately, in today's society, most university police departments are often faced with a ratio of sworn staff that is substantially low compared to the communities in which they serve, not to mention the complex geographic settings they are responsible for. The purpose of this Administrative Research Paper is to demonstrate a need for K-9 Units within university police departments. University police departments are faced with issues to include but not limited to bomb threats, building searches, narcotic detection, and detection of evidence, as well as officer safety issues. The methodology used for this study includes research on the overall effectiveness of K-9 Units within local and state law enforcement, a review of publications and newspaper articles and personal interviews with K-9 Unit officers at local and state agencies. The findings of this research revealed an increase in crime at college campuses nationally. Other findings based on surveys distributed to local and state law enforcement officers revealed a high success rate in the overall effectiveness of the K-9 Unit within their law enforcement agencies. Based on the varied research conducted for this study, the author concluded that a K-9 Unit would be an asset to the University of Texas at Houston Police Department and would substantially assist with patrol operations.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Law enforcement officers in university police departments work within large student populations. Their ratio of sworn staff is substantially low compared to the community in which they serve. Typically university geographic settings are structured with multiple buildings closely assembled by narrow streets. Despite geographic settings, these sworn officers are expected to protect and serve their communities in a quick and professional manner when curtailing crime. The question posed by this research considers whether or not K-9 units are a necessity for university police departments. The research will further demonstrate that there are more benefits than liabilities associated to the use of K-9 units. Several issues these officers are often faced with include: bomb threats, building searches, detecting evidence, narcotics detection, detecting evidence, and officer safety. It is plausible that the use of a K-9 Unit can greatly aid sworn officers within universities in becoming more efficient in patrol operations and creating a safer environment for communities. The use of K-9 Units has proven to be a valuable asset to law enforcement across America.

The methods of inquiry used will include: a review of periodicals, written materials, publications, web sites, legal opinions, case law, interviews via public telephone with administrators, K-9 Unit officers and surveys to law enforcement agencies regarding their experiences with K-9 Units. The intended outcome of this research is to determine the importance of a K-9 Unit within universities and to recommend a K-9 unit be implemented to the University of Texas at Houston Police Department. This research paper can be useful to other university police departments

that may be considering enhancing their patrol operations by implementing a K-9 Unit within their institution.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The use of police dogs was first implemented by France to aid armed citizens patrol the city of Saint Malo in the 1300s. The first law enforcement training school for dogs and their handlers was established in Belgium in 1899. In 1907, U.S. law enforcement K-9 teams were established in South Orange, New Jersey and in the New York City Police Department. Since then, there have been 3,250 police K-9 programs in the U.S. with 7,000 K-9 teams.

K-9 Units across America have been proven to be a very valuable tool in assisting local law enforcement agencies. Although they are primarily used in military, federal, state, city, and county law enforcement agencies, varied research exposes a growing need for K-9 Units to be used within university campuses as well. According to Mesloh (2003), "K-9 Units appear underused within college and university campuses. K-9 programs can be {easily} established with creative networking and planning" (p 1).

The University of Texas at Austin operates with two K-9s, recently implementing a K-9 Unit. Robert Stock, a K-9 handler on the UT-Austin Police Department, feels that a K-9 Unit has proven to be very beneficial to the University of Texas at Austin campus. He stated that the K-9 unit has aided his department in detecting narcotics, bombs and apprehending criminals. A K-9's intimidating qualities are a benefit to the University of Texas at Austin Police Department. Stock added that the K-9 Unit also provides a positive image toward their administration and that funding was provided by their administration. (R. Stock, personal communication, July 15, 2005).

K-9 Unit handler, Officer Gary Perkins, has been employed with the University of Massachusetts Amherst as a dog handler for over 1 ½ years. In a personal interview, Officer Perkins stated a K-9 Unit has been instrumental to his agency. He feels that having a canine within the University of Massachusetts Amherst has reduced violent crimes on campus. The campus of the University of Massachusetts Amherst is one of density and massive building structures. He explained that his university has experienced several drug issues associated with students (as well as non-students) entering the campus who were involved in illegal drug activity. Since the implementation of a canine unit, he shared that his department has noticed a deterrent with drug activity. With the use of a canine unit, his department was able to begin proactive patrols toward the student population. Furthermore, these patrols have generated community policing and established public interest and officer safety (G. Perkins, personal communication, July 20, 2005).

Universities have been faced with crime since the 1960's. In the month of August of 1966, a University of Texas at Austin student named Charles Whitman gained access to a tower on the campus and began shooting at people with a high-powered rifle. Whitman's rage ended by killing 17 people and wounding 35 others. Until then neither the University of Texas at Austin nor any other university had sworn officers employed on their campuses. This incident marked a significant safety concern within universities across Texas and even America. The need to create a safer environment for universities and create a proper emergency response by professional law enforcement became imminent. In 1967, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 162,

a bill that authorized every university across Texas to hire and commission officers on their campuses.

Since 1967, universities across America have benefited a great deal from university law enforcement officers by hiring sworn officers to be employed on university campuses across Texas. Law enforcements knowledge of the geographic areas on their perspective campuses has resulted in a decrease in response time to emergency calls and created a higher visibility presence to the community. Unfortunately, over the years, crime and university populations have continued to increase. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports as indicated by the Security on Campus, Inc. College and University Campus Crime Statistics, criminal activity on college and university campuses is increasing each year.

Due to a large growth in population, universities are engineering multiple building structures closely assembled together and paving narrow streets to accommodate for this growth. After a crime occurs on campus, criminals are difficult to locate due to highly populated areas and the close proximity of the buildings. This creates safety concerns for the university population.

On September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked the City of New York by killing over 5,000 men and women. Subsequently, universities as well as the nation are now faced with tension and fear regarding their safety regarding the potential for additional terrorist attacks (Mesloh, 2003). The threat of terrorist attacks is imminent even on university campuses. Many levels of law enforcement use K-9 Units very successfully as a crime strategy. One of the first concerns, which must be addressed regarding K-9 Units within universities, is the potential of liability and legal implications. In recent years, most

citizens report that the canine has been a positive tool for law enforcement. However, there have also been many complaints regarding the use of canines. For example, according to the University of New Hampshire Union Leader headline, a student filed a complaint on a canine alleging he was bitten after the university officer used the dog to control a largely peaceful crowd filled with several hundred students. (The Union Leader, n.d.)

The use of a canine in any law enforcement is governed under *Graham vs. Connor* 490 U.S. 386, taking into consideration the totality of the circumstances, a three part test should be justified for the canine's deployment, which includes: 1) the severity of the crime at issue, 2) whether or not the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of law enforcement officers or others and 3) whether or not the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight (United States Police Canine Association, 2005).

Four cases, two from the United States Court of Appeals Sixth Circuit, *Robinette vs. Barnes* and *Matthews vs. Jones*, and two from the Ninth Circuit, *Fikes vs. Cleghorn* and *Quintanilla vs. City of Downey*, all specifically state that... "...Police Service Dogs are not deadly force..." and "can often help prevent officers from having to resort to, or be subjected to, deadly force..." (United States Police Canine Association, 2005).

Unlike many university institutions across America, the University of Texas at Houston Police Department focuses on a widely diverse campus. It has two major internationally known institutions centered in the heart of Houston, Texas. With a population of over 40, 000 staff, faculty, students and workers, and a projected growth rate pending more than 30% over the next 5 years, the potential for terrorist activity



looms. Like any other major area in the United States, the University of Texas at Houston has experienced drug activity and bomb threats.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research question for this research is to determine whether or not K-9 police units are a necessity for university police departments. The research will also consider the benefits K-9 police units might provide for the University of Texas Police Department at Houston. University crime continues to rise in America. Throughout history, the K-9 has proven to be an effective policing tool in many federal, local and state agencies across America. University police officers face similar, if not the same issues that other federal, local and state agencies are faced with every day. Since the use of a K-9 police unit has been proven to be a positive tool in federal, local and state agencies, hopefully the research obtained will grant insight on how the K-9 will effectively aid university police as well.

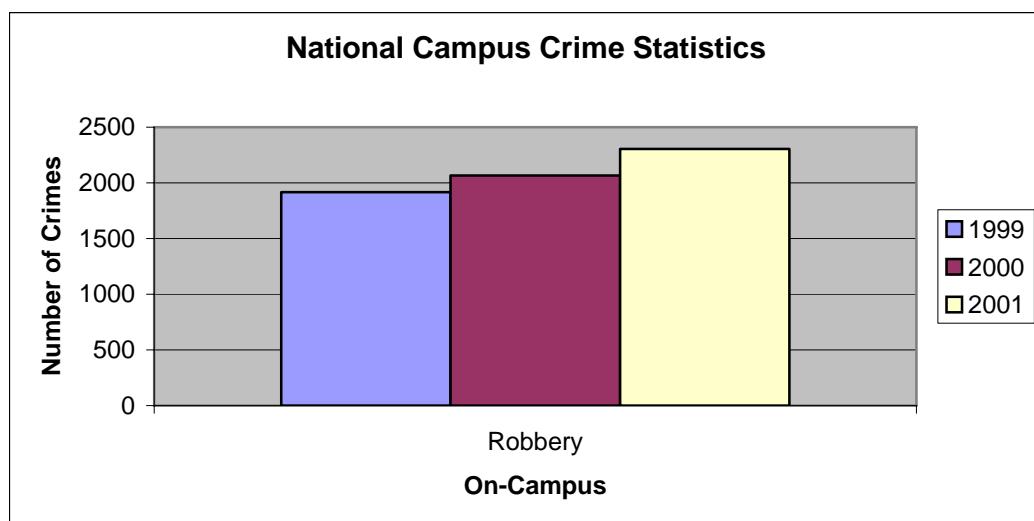
The initial research will examine the history of the K-9 police unit. History has shown that a K-9 unit has proven to be a worthy investment in curtailing crime. With the growth in populations on university campuses across America and a potential of imminent terrorist attacks, the use of a K-9 can greatly aid in their safety.

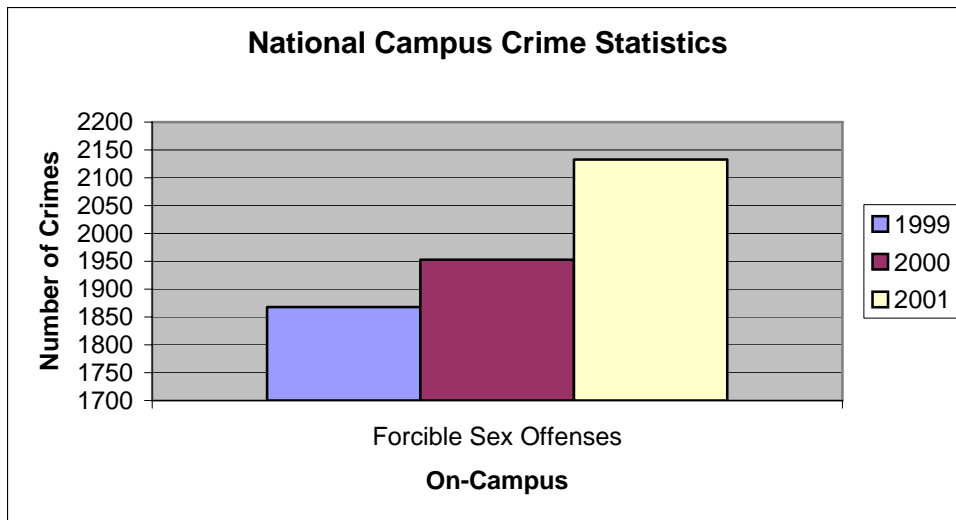
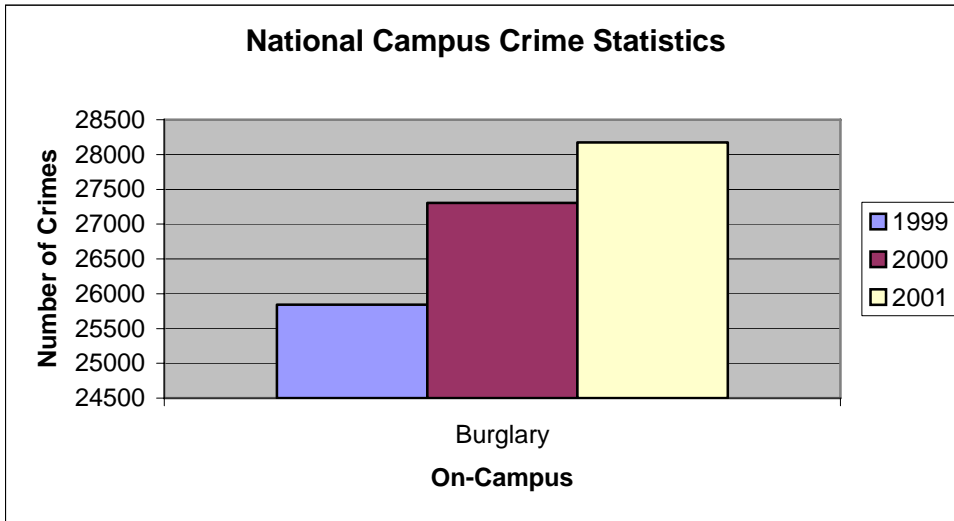
The next step will be to gain insight into university police departments. The research regarding university police departments will be done to prove the K-9's relevance in university police departments. Several instruments will be used to determine a K-9's worth toward University campuses, as well as to the University of Texas at Houston. The information will be compiled through publications, newspaper articles and interviews with K-9 Unit officers from several universities.

Interviews will be conducted by telephone with persons representing the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the University of Texas at Austin. Ideally, each representative will be active members of K-9 Units and have experience in training and handling police dogs. The interviews will center on their opinions and experience with K-9s within their perspective universities. In response to each representative's opinion, each person expressed a need for a K-9 unit within their university and saw tremendous benefits toward patrol operations. A total of 24 surveys will be sent to university, city, county and state agencies to determine the relevance of a K-9 unit within their agencies. The information gained from the research will compare the positive and negative effects that a K-9 police unit has on university police departments. These effects will be based on surveys of university police departments, interviews with university police K-9 unit handlers and case law.

## FINDINGS

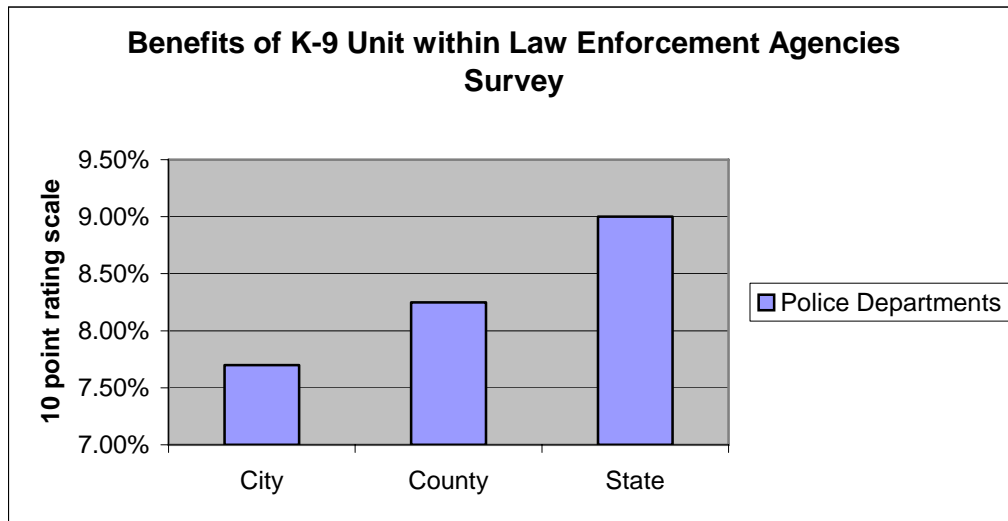
Universities in America are faced with many concerns regarding the safety of student population. Crime on college campuses continues to be a concern for university police. The graph below substantiates the growth in the following crimes on college campuses according to the Security on Campus, Inc., College and University Campus Crime Statistics.





Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Post Secondary Education

A survey was presented to twenty-four Texas state, county and city law enforcement agencies in order to obtain the benefit status of a K-9 unit within local, state, county and university agencies. Each surveyed participant was asked his/her opinion regarding the benefits of a K-9 unit on a 10 point rating scale as illustrated in the chart below.



The results of the survey reported that: 12 city municipalities were surveyed, 9 responded with a 7.7% success rate. Six county departments were surveyed and four responded with an 8.25% success rate. Two county departments surveyed did not have a K-9 unit, but desire to have one implemented within their agency. Four school and two university police departments were surveyed, three responded with a 9% success rate. Two agencies did not have a K-9 unit and one agency desired a K-9 unit. However, the other agency did not desire a K-9 unit due to the environment.

Comments from the survey ranged from the following: K-9s are beneficial through a variety of ways. Those ways include, but are not limited to: the increase in overall drug prohibition effectiveness during traffic stops, a strong use of force option, a strong scene presence, and the influential support assisting police officers in locating drugs on traffic stops.

## **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this research project was to show how and why a K-9 police unit is an effective tool in law enforcement. The question to be answered considered a K-9's relevance within university police departments. K-9 police units have been specifically known to function in federal, local and state agencies based on a specific level of crime and special operation needs. The increase in crime on college campuses has pushed its way to the forefront of university law enforcement. It has become imperative to seek and obtain more effective tools to enhance their operations.

After the review and examination of the issues regarding the overall need for K-9 Units within various state and local agencies, it is concluded that a K-9 unit would be an asset to the University of Texas at Houston Police Department and would substantially assist with patrol operations. The implementation of a K-9 unit at the University of Texas at Houston Police Department will be a useful contribution to patrol operations and the community. It is recommended that the University of Texas at Houston Police implement a K-9 Unit program. A program of this nature would increase officer safety and public safety during bomb searches, drug detection, evidence searches, and very important person's (VIP) escorts. With terrorist threats becoming a focal point in society, the K-9 police dog will bring ease to the tension the university community is feeling. By incorporating the K-9's supernatural skills with law enforcement officers, University Police Departments can effectively ensure the safety of their community.

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